

(e) receiving and converting by a second central local node the formatted telecommunications traffic from the selected data network into a form compatible with a second telecommunications network connected to the called party; and

(f) transmitting by the second central local node to the called party the converted telecommunications traffic through the second telecommunications network.

45. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the first telecommunications network is a circuit switched network.

46. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the first telecommunications network is a cellular network.

47. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the second telecommunications network is a circuit switched network.

48. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the second telecommunications network is a cellular network.

49. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the one or more criteria include user preferences.

50. (new) The method of claim 49, wherein the user preferences include a specified level of transmission quality.

51. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the one or more criteria include credit availability of the calling party.

52. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the one or more criteria include costs of routing through the one or more data networks.

53. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the step of selecting comprises the execution of a call setup procedure.

54. (new) The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of storing at least one of subscriber information, rate schedules, and call details.

55. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the selected data network includes the Internet and the step of formatting includes encoding the telecommunications traffic according to the Internet Protocol.

56. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the telecommunications traffic includes at least one of voice, fax, and signaling messages.

57. (new) The method of claim 44, further comprising the step of receiving by the second central local node from the second telecommunications network the called party's telecommunications traffic and transmitting the called party's telecommunications traffic to the calling party.

58. (new) The method of claim 57, wherein the telecommunications traffic includes signaling messages.

59. (new) The method of claim 58, wherein the signaling messages include call supervision status signal.

60. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the selected data network uses Asynchronous Transfer Mode.

61. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the selected data network uses Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol.

62. (new) The method of claim 44, wherein the selected data network uses Frame Relay technique.

63. (new) A method for selectively routing outgoing calls over one of a plurality of outbound lines including a voice-over-data-network line comprising the steps of:

evaluating transmission quality requirements of an outgoing call;

selecting an outbound line over which to route the outgoing call from a set of outbound lines which include the voice-over-data-network line if it is determined that the voice-over-data-network line provides a level of transmission quality requirement that satisfies the transmission quality requirements; and

automatically routing the outgoing call over a non-voice-over-data network line if it is determined that the voice-over-data-network line does not provide a transmission quality level that satisfies the transmission quality requirements.

64. (new) A system for routing phone calls over a data network, comprising:

means for evaluating transmission quality requirements of an outgoing call;

means for selecting an outbound line over which to route the outgoing call from a set of outbound lines which include the voice-over-data-network line if it is determined that the voice-over-data-network line provides a level of transmission quality requirement that satisfies the transmission quality requirements; and

means for automatically routing the outgoing call over a non-voice-over-data network line if it is determined that the voice-over-data-network line does not provide a transmission quality level that satisfies the transmission quality requirements.

65. (new) A system for routing telecommunications traffic through a plurality of networks that are connected to each other, comprising:

a first central local node, connected between a first telecommunications network and one or more data networks, for routing telecommunications traffic between the first telecommunications network and the one or more data networks, said first central local node being configured to select at least one of the one or more data networks for routing the telecommunications traffic based on one or more criteria and to format the

telecommunications traffic into a form that is compatible with that of the selected at least one data network; and

a second central local node, connected between the second telecommunications network and the selected at least one data network, for routing the formatted telecommunications traffic between the selected at least one data network and the second telecommunications network and for converting the formatted telecommunications traffic into a form that is compatible with the second telecommunications network.

66. (new) The system of claim 65, further comprising a data base accessible by at least one of the first and second central local nodes, said data base including information relating to at least one of credit availability of a calling party and user preferences comprising at least one of specified quality of transmission, type of telecommunications network for routing the telecommunications traffic, type of encryption security, and time to transmit the telecommunications traffic.

67. (new) The system of claim 66, wherein the data base includes a least cost routing table comprising prioritized entries of costs of routing telecommunications traffic through at least one of the plurality of data networks.

68. (new) The system of claim 65, wherein the one or more criteria include user preferences comprising at least one of specified quality of transmission, type of telecommunications network for routing the telecommunications traffic, type of encryption security, and time to transmit the telecommunications traffic.

69. (new) The system of claim 65, wherein each of said first and said second central local nodes comprises an Internet server for connecting to the Internet and a telephone server for connecting to a circuit switched network.

70. (new) The system of claim 69, wherein the telephone server includes a Public Switched Telephone Network interface.